As a consequence, at the end of his life, in the midst of his controversy with Julian of Eclanum, Augustine continues to cling to the distinction between true and false philosophy and the hope that, like himself, Julian can overcome his incessant wrangling in the name of truth. For it is only true, or Christian, philosophy that enables the lover of wisdom to rise above the dissonance of worldly philosophers in seeking the answers to questions about the self and God.[62] To appeal to dualistic categories of thought is to run the risk of ignoring the antiquity of the voice of divine wisdom that Augustine clearly encounters in his reading of Cicero's *Hortensius* and the writings of the Platonists.

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[62] *Contra Iulianum* IV, 14, 72 (PL 44, 774): Obsecro te, non sit honestior philosophia gentium quam nostra christiana, quae una est uera philosophia, quando quidem studium uel amor sapientiae significatur hoc nomine." For a discussion of the origin of the term *philosophia christiana* in this context, see Goulven Madec, "*Philosophia christiana* (Augustin, *Contra Iulianum*, IV, 14, 72)" in *Petites Études*, 163-177.

"PHILOKALIA" IN AUGUSTINE'S *DE PULCHRO ET APTO*

Even though the *Augustinus Lexikon* makes no mention of 'aptum' and the *De pulchro et apto* is usually considered[1] as nothing other than a lost work[2], a careful reading of Augustine's recollections in Book IV of the *Confessions* provides us with some insight into its significance for an understanding of his intellectual and spiritual evolution. Behind any interpretation of Augustine's remarks, which it should be remembered are those of a convert become converter, lies the double difficulty of distinguishing what he might have thought at the moment of writing his first work in 380/1 from what he intended to communicate at the moment of drawing up the *Confessions* some twenty years later (397-401). Still, given that some key points of the lost work can yet be mapped out through the passages of IV, xiii, 20 and IV, xv, 24, it would seem a valid exercise to examine at least one of these concepts in some depth and attempt to weigh its importance within the context of Augustine's thought. Here will also be the occasion for me to set out aspects of my own research through the presentation of a number of yet open questions.

The three leading points of *De pulchro et apto* that can still be recovered are firstly the notion of *amare pulchrum*, which Augustine

[1] I am grateful for a two month research grant from the Regard foundation of the Institut d'Histoire de la Réformation in Geneva, which provided the ideal environment for the preparation of the present paper.

To the best of my knowledge, the *De pulchro et apto* has received little scholarly attention and is discussed only in T. KATÔ, "*Melodia interior*, sur le traité *De pulchro et apto*", REA 12 (1966), 219-240 and J.-M. FONTANIER, "Sur le traité d'Augustin *De pulchro et apto*: convenance, beauté et adaptation", RSPT, 73 (1989), 413-421; as well as in his subsequent book, *La beauté selon saint Augustin* (Rennes, 1998).

[2] Augustine is deliberately vague about his recollection concerning the content of his first work, cf. IV, xiii, 20: "[Y] et scripsi libros 'De Pulchro et Apto', puto, duos aut tres; tu scis, deus: nam excidit mihi. Non enim habemus eos, sed aberrauerunt a nobis nescio quo modo.", though it may be noted that his subsequent comments concerning the circumstances in which the work was composed reveal none of this hesitation. T. Katô accounts for this discrepancy on the grounds that after his elevation to a see Augustine preferred to keep silent about a work where the Manichean influence would have been apparent, art. cit., 231. In a more general sense G. Bardy supports the hypothesis that the convert Augustine considered all that had been written before his conversion as belonging to the past and intended to constitute a new library of his Christian *opera*, cf. *Retract.*, in *Bibliothèque Augustinienne*, vol., 12, 31-32. In any case it seems likely that Augustine was himself responsible for the decision to let the treatise disappear.

distinguishes from *aptum*; then the definition of *pulchritudo* as that which causes attraction through its attributes *decus* and *species*; and finally, the characteristic distinction between the *monas* and the *dyas*. In this paper, however, I intend to limit my attention to the first point, namely that of *amare pulchrum* and its implications for the distinction then developed between *pulchrum* and *aptum*.

Still, before plunging any further into the subject, it is perhaps useful to recall something of the context of the key passages from Book IV. Augustine starts IV, xiii, 20 with a rhetorical *mea culpa* concerning his own pride which rendered him ignorant of the true sense of God's descending[3] love as revealed through the Incarnation and then goes on to stress his lack of any real knowledge given that the scope of his understanding was confined to the outer corporeal forms[4]. This point should be born in mind if we are later to grasp in what sense any subsequent change through his adherence to the Catholic Church might best be assessed. Let us now examine *amare pulchrum* and see how the concept would have been developed in Augustine's *De pulchro et apto*.

I. *Amare pulchrum* and *pulchrum/aptum*

Instead of providing a definition of beauty from the outset, in the *Confessions* IV, xiii, 20 Augustine recalls formulating a series of questions designed rather to incite a more gradual reflection on the quiddity of beauty: "Num amamus aliquid nisi pulchrum? Quid est ergo pulchrum? Et quid est pulchritudo?". This initial reflection on the love of the beautiful then leads to the following question: "Quid est quod nos allicit et conciliat rebus, quas amamus?". It is only then that a definition of beauty is suggested in recapitulating the idea of *amare pulchrum*: "Nisi enim esset in eis decus et species, nullo modo nos ad se mouerent."

Taking up the image of the wholeness of body so common to antiquity[5], Augustine here describes the beauty of wholeness through

[3] IV, xii, 19 (CC 27,50): "Numquid et post descensum uitae non uultis ascendere et uiuere? Sed quo ascenditis, quando in alto estis et posuistis in caelo os uestrum? Descendite, ut ascendatis, et ascendatis ad deum. Cecidistis enim ascendendo contra deum.".

[4] IV, xiii, 20 (50): "Haec tunc non noueram et amabam pulchra inferiora et ibam in profundum"; xv, 24 (52): "Sed tantae rei cardinem in arte tua nondum uidebam, omnipotens, qui facis mirabilia solus, et ibat animus per formas corporeas"; xv, 26 (53): "[Y] et imaginabar formas corporeas et caro carnem accusabam".

[5] Cf. "Corpus", *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*, ed. A. Ernout/A. Meillet, Paris, 19594; Plato, Tim., 33a; Cicero, De off., I, xxviii, 98 ; *De fin.*, III, v, 18.

reference to bodily perfection, where the seemliness of each part is determined by its adaptation to the end of the whole[6]. Here Augustine employs the classic distinction between a complete and independent beauty, which is attractive in itself (cf. *totum*; *quod per se ipsum*; *quod nos allicit et conciliat rebus, quas amamus*; *nos ad se mouerent*) and a partial, functional, and dependent sense of *aptum*. Linguistically Augustine develops this notion of aptum in relation to ad[7], as signifying a proper purpose, and here we can see a parallel between the distinction *pulchrum/aptum* and the better-known example of end/means. Since "ad" must also designate a sense of direction, so the *pulchrum/aptum* distinction implies a movement of the soul through the attraction of the lover towards beauty[8]. We can here postulate the following logic of the dynamics of love: beauty causes love which forms unity. In this context aptum is a relative concept, whose proper value can only be defined in terms of its utility with reference to the governing whole.

It may be noted that both Cicero and Plotinus share a similar understanding of the beauty of the corporeal whole. In presenting his ideas on visual beauty, the latter talks about beauty as being found in a symmetrical whole rather than in the individual part[9]. Meanwhile Cicero takes the body to be an example of *pulchritudo*, that is a harmonious whole (*conuenientia*) brought together through the ordering of its various parts (cf. *apta compositione*), something which in turn serves to stimulate (cf. *mouere*) the eyes and stir up a sense of delight[10].

Still, the platonic sense of beauty as eternal reality, εἶδος refers not to outward shape but rather to that knowledge of the Form through a process of ascension, a stripping off of the sensuous elements, from a beautiful body to a beautiful work, from this to beautiful science, and hence up to beauty itself[11]. Thus if we take at face value what Augustine says in the *Confessions*, his understanding of *amare pul-*

[6] *Hipp. maj.*, 290c-290d, 293e-294a; *De fin.*, III, xiv, 46.

[7] *Conf.*, IV, xiii, 20 (51): "quod ideo deceret, quoniam apte accommodaretur alicui, sicut pars corporis ad uniuersum suum aut calciamentum ad pedem et similia.".

[8] The reason why love is drawn to beauty may simply be explained in platonic terms, where it is described as the desire for that which is necessary to fill a lacuna or compliment an imperfection. Now beauty is perfect and as such objective, universal and transcendent and its integrity thus stirs up a longing for the eternal possession of its good, cf. L. ROBIN, *Théorie platonicienne de l'amour*, Paris 1908, 14.

[9] *Enn.*, I, 6, 1.

[10] *De off.*, I, xxviii, 98.

[11] *Banquet* 211c.

chrum in his *De pulchro et apto* could scarcely be taken as a reference to this form of platonic knowledge, but must rather be seen as nothing other than a blinding and confusing pursuit of "images" of the Form. This ties in with what he now sought to stress in what I might term the "rhetoric of conversion", namely that a knowledge of the eternal Form is impossible unless we know and love God as revealed through the Incarnation in the *forma serui*. Here Augustine clearly departs from the platonic norm and this despite his elaboration and use of a similar dialectic of ascensio. The crucial difference is to be found in the recognition of "descensio" as a precondition for ascensio: "Descendite, ut ascendatis".

II. *Pulchrum et aptum*: a logie[12] of distinction?

According to the definition supplied in *De ordine* II, xi, 30, reason consists in the ability to relate and to distinguish[13]. Yet any reference is in itself a distinction between the referent and the referred, or, in terms perhaps closer to the sense of Augustine, between the measure and that which needs to be measured. Returning now to the distinction between *pulchrum*, which is defined as *per se ipsum* and *aptum*, in this context normally subordinated to the condition *ad*, the fundamental difference between the two should again be noted. It is in this light that we see clearly why Augustine explains both the fittingness of the parts and the accord of the whole in terms of *decentia: aptum* is *quod ad aliquid adcommodatum deceret* while *pulchrum* is *quod per se ipsum decere*[14], a point which well emphasizes the two categories of seemliness. Here is confirmed what has already been said, namely that *pulchrum/aptum* stems in fact from a logic of distinction between the absolute perfect universal order of the whole (*totum*) and the ordered but relative propriety of its *partes*.

Our further point to note by way of explaining the *pulchrum/aptum* distinction is the fact that the *De pulchro et apto* was dedicated

[12] The word "logic" is here being employed not in the sense of dialectics, but rather as a coherent process of reasoning designed to distinguish between the logic of thought and its rhetorical expression. Concerning the role of dialectics in the art of rhetoric, see M. COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from antiquity to the early Middle Ages*, Leiden 1985, vol., I, 53-56; H. LAUSBERG, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, München 1960, vol., I, 45-46; J. PÉPIN, *Saint Augustin et la dialectique*, in *The Saint Augustine Lecture 1972*, Villanova 1976, 194-210.

[13] "Ratio est mentis motio, ea quae discuntur distinguendi et connectendi potens [Y]." (CC 29,124).

[14] *Conf.*, IV, xv, 24 (CC 27,52s.).

to an established and highly cultivated Syrian rhetor, Hierius. It was only natural that at the very beginnings of his career Augustine should have looked to this source for approval and certain philosophical and rhetorical ideas were indubitably introduced within the treatise to this end. Now according to Quintilian there are two levels of *aptum*, the one at a lower level, designating "quid expediat" and the other higher one which refers to "quid deceat". Even though both levels concern the rhetorical ideal of "dicere apte", the first is related to a form of utility, whereas the latter had the ethical *honestum* as its point of reference[15]. Even though *pulchrum* provides for a larger sense than *honestum*, this distinction of Quintilian between the two categories of aptum as short-term expediency and the supreme good of moral beauty enables us better to see how Augustine could employ the Ciceronian formula *honestum/utile* to introduce his own logic of distinction between *frui* and *uti* in his later work *De diuersis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* q. 30.

This then allows us to defend a hypothesis concerning the unity of Augustine's thought in this respect from the time of the first elaboration of the *pulchrum/aptum* distinction down to his later view on the logic of frui/uti. This latter seeks to distinguish between the final fruition of the ultimate good and the process of knowing how constructively to use the penultimate means appropriate to that end. As we saw in the earlier formulation of *amare pulchrum*, beauty produces the effect of attraction and unity. In his *De diuersis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* q. 30, the fruition of *honestas* in terms of the *intellegibilis pulchritudo*, that which we desire strongly "on account of" itself (cf. *quod propter se ipsum expetendum est*) is expounded as the possession of *uoluptas* (cf. *capere uoluptatem*). Later in the context of the *De doctrina christiana* I, Augustine provides a clearer explanation of *frui*, seen as a permanent adherence to God through love (cf. *inhaerere*) in the ultimate possession of the desired goal, which is the fruition of God's Trinitarian reality, leading to beatitude (cf. *facere beatos, efficere beatus*)[16].

For all that we cannot argue for an exact identity between *pulchrum* and *frui*, any more than for one between *aptum* and *uti*[17], yet the underlying unity of the logic of distinction in this respect cannot be denied. The mind has a logic of its own and here that of Augustine

[15] H. LAUSBERG, op. cit., I, 511.

[16] *De doct. christ.*, I, iv, 4 (CC 32,8); I, xxxiii, 37 (27).

[17] FONTANIER, *art. cit.*, 420; op. cit., 26.

can be seen to have operated with a marked degree of consistency. It is against this background that I now propose to end this communication with a couple of questions that may serve to invite further reflection.

III. Some open questions

All too often, we think of any kind of conversion as implying some form of change and it might be worthwhile briefly to consider Augustine's conversion in this respect. Despite his profound regret not to have been able to recognize God's Form in all that exists, it is yet interesting to note that the idea of *amare pulchrum* itself never changed. If we keep this in mind as a kind of Leitmotiv up until his oft-cited confession: "Sero te amaui, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam noua" [18] and place side by side the young Augustine's initial question: "Quid est quod nos allicit et conciliat rebus, quas amamus?" with "Quid autem amo, cum te amo?" [19], then I wonder if it would not be better to qualify his conversion as a form of "adjustment", a realignment of the focal point of human existence, which might best be compared to the "tuning" process of our "inner melody". Augustine's experience was to witness the beauty of God in so powerful a manner as not to have been able to turn away and so, subjugated by his grace, he came both to see the inner form of the visible and to realize his proper place within the whole of creation. In this sense, his conversion was not a change from the love of corporeal forms to that of spiritual form, but rather a refocusing of the lens through which he came to see both the visible and the invisible in continuity.

Here we may glimpse some of Augustine's originality in introducing aptum as a means of describing the constant process of adjustment implied by conversion, as for instance in his account of M. Victorinus' conversion[20]. Yet this in turn invites us to ask the question as to whether a treatment of Augustine's aesthetic or rather pulchristic sensitivity should really be limited to this period of *De pulchro et apto* or whether it did not continue to provide a key element in his elaboration of the *uti/frui* distinction, together with his sapiential aesthetics of *mensura*, *numerus* and *pondus*. At the same time, and to provide a more practical reflection by way of conclusion, it might be suggested that this idea of "amare pulchrum" could provide a real challenge for our understanding of the unity of Christian faith in diversity. It is when with Augustine we start to turn to God as beauty that we cannot but love, and it is in this context that both individuals and communities may come to fulfill their proper measure, number and weight.

[18] *Conf.*, X, xxvii, 38 (CC 27,175).

[19] *Ibid.*, X, vi, 8 (158s.); cf. D. DOUCET, "*L'ars memoriae* dans les *Confessions*", REA, 33 (1987), 49-69.

[20] *Conf.*, VIII, iv, 9 (119): "et uidebant uasa eius erepta mundari et aptari in honorem tuum et fieri utilia domino ad omne opus bonum." In the same line, Augustine prays for the harmonious adjustment of his soul: "Virtus animae meae, intra in eam et coapta tibi, ut habeas et possideas sine macula et ruga." (*Ibid.*, X, I, 1; 153). Cf. *De uer. rel.*, XXXIX, 72 (CC 32,234), where Augustine employs the notion of *conuenientia* of *homo interior*, going further in his elaboration of *aptum/aptari/coaptatio*.

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